R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 012 696 SP 000 977

PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL FACULTY MEETINGS.

BY- AMIDON, EDMUND BLUMBERG, ARTHUR
CHICAGO UNIV., ILL., MIDWEST ADMINISTRATION

PUB DATE NOV 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.24 6P.

DESCRIPTORS- *ADMINISTRATOR ATTITUDES, EVALUATION, ORGANIZATION, QUESTIONNAIRES, RESPONSIBILITY, *STAFF MEETINGS, STATISTICAL ANALYSIS, TABLES (DATA), *TEACHER ADMINISTRATOR RELATIONSHIP, *TEACHER ATTITUDES, CHICAGO

THE EFFECTS OF FACULTY MEETINGS ON TEACHER MORALE WERE INVESTIGATED VIA A SIX-ITEM QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDED TO BY 40 ELEMENTARY AND 49 SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHERS ENROLLED IN GROUP DYNAMICS WORK AT ONE UNIVERSITY AND BY 74 ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS SELECTED AT RANDOM FROM A STATE EDUCATIONAL DIRECTORY. RESPONSES WERE ON A NINE-STEP, NEGATIVE-TO-POSITIVE SCALE TO SUCH QUESTIONS AS (1) WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO FACULTY MEETINGS, (2) DO YOU FEEL FREE TO EXPRESS YOURSELF, AND (3) WHAT DO YOU THINK OF OTHER FACULTY MEMBERS. TEACHERS' RESPONSES WERE MAINLY IN THE NEGATIVE TO NEUTRAL RANGE, WHILE PRINCIPALS' RESPONSES TENDED TO BE POSITIVE. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE RESPONSES OF TEACHERS AND OF PRINCIPALS WERE STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT. ALSO, ON FOUR OF THE SIX ITEMS, TEACHERS' RESPONSES WERE MORE VARIABLE, WHEREAS FOR PRINCIPALS, THERE WAS A "TYPICAL" REACTION. RESULTS WERE INTERPRETED AS SHOWING THAT TEACHERS WERE CONCERNED WITH THE CLASSROOM, BUT PRINCIPALS WITH THE ENTIRE SCHOOL. THE LARGE GAP BETWEEN THE TWO GROUPS SUGGESTED THE NEED FOR MORE RESEARCH ON THE SCHOOL AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL ENTITY AND FOR DEVOTING INSERVICE TRAINING TO ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN "ADMINISTRATORS NOTEBOOK," VOLUME 15, NUMBER 3, NOVEMBER 1966, AND IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM MIDWEST ADMINISTRATION CENTER, 5835 KIMBARK AVENUE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS 60637, FOR $0.25. (RP)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

Vol. XV November, 1966 No. 3

Administrator's Notebook

SP000977
ED012696
J600
MAR 10 1967

PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL FACULTY MEETINGS

by
Edmund Amidon and Arthur Blumberg
Temple University

One of the most frequently employed and appropriate approaches to the solution of problems of teaching and learning focuses on the classroom unit and what takes place within its milieu. Despite its paramount importance, any understanding of classroom activities gives only partial insight into the nature of the total school organization. Concern also needs to be directed to those other parts of the organizational structure of the school which may have a direct effect on the teacher's desire and enthusiasm to teach effectively and to work cooperatively with his peers and with the administration of the school. It is evident that teacher behavior cannot be divorced from other aspects of the organizational context if a complete understanding is to be gained.[1]

Because it represents one of the few regular occasions when the faculty is together for purposes of work, the school faculty meeting provides a situation from which valuable insights can be gained concerning the social psychological nature of any particular school organization. Previous research conducted by the co-authors of this article indicated that there is a definite relationship between the way teachers feel about their faculty meetings and the effectiveness of working relationships within the school as a whole.[2] But schools include principals as well as teachers and therefore it was considered important to investigate principals' perceptions of faculty meetings, thus making it possible to determine the extent of agreement with the perceptions of teacher personnel. Since other studies have indicated that hierarchical position in an organization affects one's attitudes toward it and its activities, it was a central hypothesis of this study that principals would perceive faculty meetings differently than would teachers. Indeed, if significant perceptual differences could be found, it was suggested that they would provide a more complete understanding of the conflicts that arise in many schools.

By administering a questionnaire to a total of eighty-nine teachers (forty elementary and forty-nine secondary) who were engaged in group dynamics work at Temple University in the spring of 1960, the data for the teacher group were obtained.[3] On the basis of an intensive analysis of the kinds of interpersonal relationships reported as taking place at their faculty meetings, it was determined that the nature of the faculty meeting (faculty-centered or principal-centered) was related to the perceptions and attitudes which teachers have about its effectiveness. In addition, it was concluded that the interpersonal nature of the faculty meeting reflects accurately the status of interpersonal relationships which exist in the school as a whole.

Administrator's Notebook
published monthly, September through May, by the
MIDWEST ADMINISTRATION CENTER
The University of Chicago
5835 Kimbark Avenue, Chicago 37, Illinois

LUVERN L. CUNNINGHAM.....Director
K. GEORGE PEDERSEN.....Editor
D. GENE WATSON.....Assistant Editor
EVELYN LAUER.....Production Secretary

The Midwest Administration Center sponsors a co-operative program of research and action designed to contribute to the improvement of educational administration.

Annual subscription to the Notebook (September through May), $2.00. Single copy of any issue, 35 cents. Quantity discounts are available. Address all inquiries to the editor.

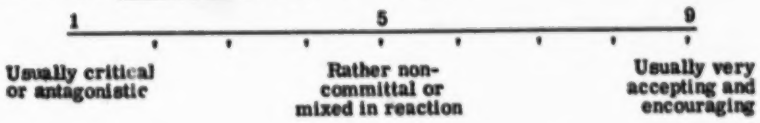
Microfilm copies of the Notebook are available from University Microfilms, 313 North First Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

Copyright 1966 by The University of Chicago

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY L. L. Cunningham, Director Midwest Administration Center TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE U.S. OFFICE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER."

The data-gathering instrument employed in this research was similar to the one administered to the teachers in the previously cited study and was designed to assess two different types of reactions of the school principal. Five questions were concerned with the latter's perceptions and attitudes as they relate to faculty meetings, while the remaining portion of the questionnaire attempted to elicit the respondent's perceptions of the manner in which his faculty viewed principal-teacher and teacher-teacher relations. Each item was expressed as a question to be answered on a nine-point scale with provision for responses ranging from "most negative" (a score of one) to "most positive" (a score of nine). The following is an example of the scales used in the questionnaire:

When a teacher makes a comment or raises a question in a meeting, how do you usually respond to it? (Please check)



Questionnaires were distributed by mail to ninety-two principals who were randomly selected from a state educational directory. Completed returns were received from seventy-four (80 per cent) of the administrators surveyed, including thirty-six responses from elementary principals and the remaining thirty-eight replies from secondary school administrators.

Before an analysis of the data is provided and the findings reported, the reader should be reminded concerning two limitations of this study. Recognition should be made of the fact that the two studies used in this comparison were completed at different times; further, that the two groups surveyed were not employed in the same educational environments.

Data Analysis and Findings

Earlier studies of teacher attitudes have suggested that teachers have consistently negative attitudes toward faculty meetings,[4] and thus a comparison of these attitudes with those of the principals surveyed became the major concern of the data analysis. Mean scores for the two sample groups were compared statistically by using the t-test. Several items which revealed differences between the variances of the two groups were subjected to analysis by the approximate method as proposed by Cochran and Cox.[5]

By employing the F-test, a comparison of variances was determined for each item and these data are presented in Table 1. The variances of the two groups were significantly different from each other at the . 01 or the . 05 levels of confidence on all questions with the exception of items 4 and 5.

Table 1
VARIANCES AND F-RATIOS FOR PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER GROUPS

Item	Teacher Variance	Principal Variance	F-Ratio	Probability Level
1. How does the principal respond to a teacher comment?	4.20	1.37	3.07	.01
2. How do teachers respond to other teacher comments?	3.35	5.50	1.64	.01
3. How free do other teachers feel to express themselves?	4.50	2.90	1.55	.05
4. How free do you feel to express yourself?	5.12	3.45	1.48	N.S.
5. What is your general reaction to faculty meetings in your school?	2.70	2.90	1.07	N.S.
6. What do you think is the general condition of the faculty?	5.70	3.55	1.60	.05
7. How close do you feel to other members of the faculty?	3.77	1.87	2.01	.01
8. How easy do you find it talking with teachers (or the principal) about new ideas and suggestions for the school?	5.15	1.95	2.64	.01

Further study of the above table reveals that with one exception it is the variance of the teacher group which was the larger. Only on the second item, "When a teacher makes a comment or raises a question in a meeting, how do the other teachers usually respond to it?" was the variance of the principal sample greater than that computed for the teacher group.

All of the means and t-ratios are presented below in Table 2. For each of the eight comparisons which were made, a t-ratio was calculated and was found to be significantly different at the . 01 level of probability.

Table 2
MEANS AND t-RATIOS FOR PRINCIPAL AND TEACHER GROUPS *

Item	Teacher Mean	Principal Mean	t-Ratio
1. How does the principal respond to a teacher comment?	5.40	7.75	6.40
2. How do teachers respond to other teacher comments?	4.62	6.42	4.09
3. How free do other teachers feel to express themselves?	5.22	6.74	4.10
4. How free do you feel to express yourself?	4.67	6.76	4.50
5. What is your general reaction to faculty meetings in your school?	3.30	6.50	7.11
6. What do you think is the general condition of the faculty?	4.80	6.94	4.65
7. How close do you feel to other members of the faculty?	5.25	7.13	5.60
8. How easy do you find it talking with teachers (or the principal) about new ideas and suggestions for the school?	5.52	7.68	5.20

* Differences between all means were significant at the . 01 level of probability.

An item by item analysis of these data presented in tabular form above reveals a number of findings of interest. Among the more important are the following:

1. Concerning the manner in which principals responded to teachers' comments or questions in the faculty meeting, the mean for the teachers' responses on Item 1 was at the

midpoint of the scale, indicating that principals were viewed by the teachers as somewhat non-committal in their responses to other faculty members. On the other hand, principals perceived their own responses to teachers as very accepting and encouraging. It is clearly evident that dfferent points of view were held by the two groups concerning the behavior of principals in relation to teachers.

2. The reaction of other teachers to a teacher's comment was investigated by the second item. The mean teacher response was mildly negative and critical, while the average principal response was more encouraging. Differences between principals' and teachers' responses, it should be noted, were substantial and were similar to those on the first item, thus indicating that the principals were of the opinion that teachers reacted more openly to teacher comments than was perceived to be the case by the teachers themselves. Both teachers and principals felt that teachers are more negative in their reactions to the contributions of fellow teachers than are principals.

3. In the third item teachers and principals were asked about the extent to which teachers were free to express themselves in faculty meetings. The results show that teachers believed that they needed to be "rather careful in what they say." By way of contrast, the responses of principals to this item were considerably more positive and might be characterized by the phrase, "say whatever they wish."

4. Item 4 was designed to determine how each group of teachers and principals felt about their own freedom to express themselves. Teachers indicated a tendency to be rather cautious about their own participation, while principals apparently felt more freedom to say whatever they wished at faculty meetings.

5. The general level of satisfaction with faculty meetings assessed in Item 5 indicated that teachers' reactions on this item were more extreme than on any other in the scale. Teachers rated faculty meetings somewhere between "fairly satisfactory" and "a waste of time" while principals were of the opinion that faculty meetings are "an effective use of time and energy."

6. The sixth question is the first of three concerned with faculty relationships. At one end of this scale is "alert, aware, interested," and at the opposite end, "bogged down, negative, dead on its feet." The average teacher reaction might best be described by the phrase "fairly interested in doing a good job," while principals believed teachers to be "alert, aware, and interested."

7. Dealing with the extent to which teachers and principals feel close to the rest of the faculty, Item 7 demonstrated again that teachers are rather neutral, stating that they perceived faculty relations as somewhat casual. That faculty members are "very close, everyone pulling together" was typical of the response of the principals to this same item.

8. The final item dealt with the extent to which teachers and principals find it easy to communicate verbally with one another. The typical teacher positions was represented by the statement "rather easy to talk to the principal if my idea was a good one." More positive in their reactions to this item, principals tended to state that it is "easy for me at any time" to talk to teachers. Thus, although teachers feel limited in the number of times during which they can comfortably converse with the principal, at no time do principals feel inhibited in their efforts to initiate discussions with teachers, regardless of the particular situation.

Conclusions

The reactions of both teachers and principals are quite consistent on all of the items included in the questionnaire, with principals viewing faculty meetings as attractive, free, and productive situations and teachers being, at best, rather neutral toward them. The same attitudes which are evident in answers to items concerning faculty meetings tend to be reflected in teachers' and principals' attitudes toward interpersonal problems in the school. Responses on this second group of three items strongly suggest that faculty attitudes toward faculty meetings and interaction within them are reflections of more general attitudes toward the school.

The differences between the means of the two groups indicate clearly that teachers generally are neutral to negative in their attitudes toward school organization and faculty interaction, while principals are inclined to be positive. A plausible explanation of this can be found in the emotional stake the principal has in the school. The principals see the total school as their province and concern. They have overall responsibility for its operation and have a need to perceive things in a satisfactory light. To do otherwise would be ego-damaging. Another possible conclusion is that because principals feel and assume more responsibility for faculty meetings and similar forms of school organization than do teachers, these administrators will view such strategies in a more positive way. On the other hand, teachers are inclined to view their primary responsibility in terms of the effective operation

of the classroom, with concern for the school as a complete functional unit of definite secondary importance. Perhaps teachers see the school organization merely as the vehicle through which they can satisfy their major interest and not as an institution which truly deserves their attention and energy.

The differences between the variances of the two groups are also of importance. With the exception of the response to one item, the principals' reactions revealed remarkably little deviation. On the other hand, teacher responses indicated considerable variability of response to each question item. Therefore, while there was a typical principal reaction to the majority of items, no such congruency existed for the teacher group. This consistency in perception on the part of administrators appears to be related to a principal's greater feeling of responsibility, while teachers, not feeling the same commitment to the total school and its operation, react with a wider range of responses to any aspect of the complete school organization. Further, there appears to be a tendency for perceptions of faculty meetings to reflect one's general perceptions of the school organization.

Implications

If subsequent research in the area of school organizational dynamics lends support to the findings that have been presented here, and there appears to be no reason to suspect that it will not, it is possible to speculate on implications of this research that go far beyond the question of whether or not faculty meetings are productive.

The differences in response imply that we need more research and theory development which deal with the school as an organizational entity and which are concerned with uncovering the multiple factors that account for the peculiar culture of each school. Behavioral scientists are becoming increasingly aware of the need for a deeper understanding of the organizational context in which a person works, if they expect to understand the complex causes of his behavior. Much research of this kind is undertaken in business and industry, while relatively little has been conducted in the field of education.

A sampling of questions that could be answered by the kind of research suggested would be: Is there a manner through which school cultures can be characterized and classified? What factors contribute to the establishment of one school culture as different from another? What are the effects of different organizational cultures on the behavior of teachers, pupils, or parents?

The wide differences between the way principals and teachers perceive and feel about occupational problems are an indication of the inadequacy of the communications network between the two groups and have implications for the kind of in-service programs which are conducted in the schools. In-service training usually focuses on particular aspects of the teaching process or upon the consideration of new developments in the teaching methodology as they relate to certain specialties. When conducted under appropriate conditions with first-rate resource people it is clear that this type of training should be continued. But it is also quite apparent that in-service time should be given over to what is currently being defined as organizational development. Regardless of what it is called, there would seem to be little doubt that time and energy need to be expended in the schools in order to develop each school as a better functioning organization and to establish the kind of organizational culture that encourages healthy growth and effective communication among teachers and principals, as well as between teachers and students.

A final implication concerns the need to research the lack of consensus on the part of teachers as compared to principals. Why does this extensive variance in response exist? One might speculate about several possible reasons for this failure to agree but the nature and the extent of this variance do suggest the need for further investigation.

---

[1] C. Argyris, "Organizational Leadership," Leadership and Interpersonal Behavior (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), pp. 326-354.

[2] E. J. Amidon and A. Blumberg, "School Faculty Meetings: The Teacher's Point of View," Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals, XLIX (September 1962), pp. 66-72.

[3] The authors wish to cite Dr. David H. Jenkins, Director of the Group Dynamics Center, Temple University, for his help in the construction of the questionnaire.

[4] A. Blumberg and E. J. Amidon, "Teachers' Attitudes Toward School Faculty Meetings," a paper delivered at the American Educational Research Association, Atlantic City, 1962.

[5] As described in Palmer O. Johnson, Statistical Methods in Research (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1949), p. 74.